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NATIONAL SECURITY'S NEW INSIDERS

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By Michael Wright

"WHERE IS SACEUR?" demands a voice from the command post.

All hell is breaking loose in the Balkans, the Persian Gulf is ablaze with burning tankers, and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe — Saceur — is AWOL. He turns up, breathless, 10 minutes late, explaining that his pregnant wife had a false alarm.

It is crisis-simulation time at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. And once Saceur has taken his place at a crowded table bedecked with miniature national flags of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the game resumes.

More than ever before, civilian specialists are involved in war-and-peace games.

Here in the university "war room" four floors above Massachusetts Avenue, in the heart of Washington's diplomatic quarter, the uniforms of the day include pin-stripe suits and sweatshirts. In real life, the 18 players are a cross section of the Washington scene. One is an assistant naval attaché at the Spanish Embassy. Another is an American Foreign Service officer soon to be posted to Europe. A third covers the Defense Department for a news magazine. Most of the rest are graduate students working for their Ph.D's. An instructor and four students who helped draft the 26-page game plan preside at their slightly elevated command post.

The player taking the role of the Greek Ambassador bristles when he hears that American infantry units have been alerted for deployment from the United States to the Persian Gulf. Greece needs those troops, he complains, in view of the just-disclosed Bulgarian invasion of Yugoslavia. At the halfway break, the "diplomats" and "generals" huddle over coffee and chocolate-chip cookies, trying to reach informal agreement on actions that would insure allied comity and good grades. The control group concocts a "destabilizing element" for the scenario: The Soviet Union is interfering with flights into West Berlin and moving troops toward the German frontier. A little something to make the class improvise in a hurry.

Almost any week, similar scenes take place in campus war rooms across the country. For these are boom times for the national-security community — that eminently American phenomenon that combines civilian expertise with government dollars to produce a flow of studies and recommendations for the better use of American military power.

In most other countries with substantial military forces, such planning is left to the government's career bureaucracy. In the United States these days, it is the 2,000 or so specialists

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of "the community," as they like to style their esoteric brotherhood, who largely determine such things as the number of nuclear warheads to be mounted on missiles planned for the next decade or the kind of warships to be added to the expanding American Navy. It is these craftsmen of national security whose crisis simulations are largely responsible for this country's contingency plans for the use of force — whether in a brush-fire war in the third world or in a military conflict with the Soviet Union ranging from conventional hostilities to nuclear exchange.

By the same token, many of these specialists concentrate on how to prevent potential crises from billowing into war. As the Reagan Administration prepares for a new round of arms-control negotiations with Moscow, the "community" braces for renewed activity in this field.

The membership of this national-security club is a roster of the professions. The list includes physicists, historians, engineers, political scientists, chemists, lawyers, retired military officers and assorted academics. In the mid-1940's, they were numbered in the dozens. By the late 1970's, their numbers and influence had grown to close to present proportions. Reviewing the 1984 Presidential campaign and the scores of Congressional races that featured differences over defense priorities, a former national-security official in the Carter Administration said, "From start to finish, the community set the parameters of the debate, whether the subject was arms control or the need for a new manned strategic bomber like the B-1." With the impatience with outsiders that seems endemic to the trade, the analyst added: "These questions are too complicated for either politicians or the public. They need help."

Because much of their work is highly classified or impenetrably arcane, the civilian experts once conducted most of their business in relative obscurity — with such notable exceptions as the late Herman Kahn, the futurologist who popularized the expression "thinking about the unthinkable." Today, the field is crowded, the competition for prized Government posts and university faculty appointments intense. And so, like it or not, many of the masterminds of national security devote much of their time to hustling.

Freelance analysts are regulars on network talk shows when arguments rage in Congress over, for instance, the merits of artillery shells that blanket their targets with nerve gas, or when some distant jungle or desert war heats up. In the fall of 1983, the tides had barely washed away the tracks left by Marine Corps tanks on Grenada's beaches before a platoon of civilian defense experts fired off a volley of pieces for the Op-Ed pages of the major newspapers, explaining what had *really* happened on that Caribbean speck.

With a new session of Congress under way, such controversial and costly projects as the MX missile and the Star Wars strategic defense system are coming under increased scrutiny by the community's polemicists. Some of the graduate students who participate in war games like the ones at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies can expect to be making their debuts soon as drop-in authorities on the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour or in the hallowed pages of Foreign Affairs — or, if they are really lucky, to fill important-sounding posts in the Pentagon and the White House's National Security Council.

BY MOST RECKONings, the community's genesis came in 1946, when the Air Force began recruiting specialists from university campuses and private research laboratories. Among other things, they were to devise ways of integrating the atomic bomb into American strategy. The study was named Project Rand (standing for research and development); it soon evolved into the Rand Corporation, the prestigious research center at Santa Monica, Calif. Rand remains by far the most famous of the half-dozen big research centers that get much of their operating funds and directions from the Defense Department.

Over the years, the community has played an influential role in the periodic revision of Washington's military strategy. During the Eisenhower era, the doctrine was one of "massive retaliation" against any Soviet incursion into Western Europe. Under President Kennedy, the doctrine was refined into "flexible response": The United States would use nuclear weapons to repel a Soviet invasion of Western Europe if conventional defenses proved inadequate. Under Presidents Carter and Reagan, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence shifted from targeting Soviet industrial centers to targeting Soviet missile forces and command centers. The reasoning was that this made the American deterrent more effective — and that, if it came to war nonetheless, it would reduce civilian casualties on both sides and enable the United States to "prevail."

During the divisive Vietnam War years, the community's standing declined; so did the popularity of national-security studies on college campuses. But within the last decade, the community has been expanded by a new generation of experts, including a smattering of young women. "National security is now a mass-produced phenomenon," says Gregg Herken, an assistant professor of history at Yale University. "In the late 1940's, every-

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one who knew anything about nuclear strategy could have fit around a patio table at Rand on a sunny day. Now they are all over the place."

Many of the specialists have zeroed in on Washington. The capital has become "the center of the universe for the community," in the words of Brent Scowcroft, a retired Air Force general who recently headed a commission appointed by President Reagan to recommend a basing plan for the MX missile. Some of the more influential practitioners of the trade have been appointed to positions in the White House, the State Department and the various intelligence agencies. Other specialists work on Capitol Hill, helping key senators and representatives decipher, promote or oppose the Administration's military and foreign-affairs initiatives. Still others may be found in the scores of nonprofit research centers that devote much of their time to national-security issues. Across the Potomac River, in Virginia, clusters of profit-making consulting firms have sprung up alongside the city's perimeter freeway.

The private organizations — such as the Heritage Foundation, the Brookings Institution, Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies and the American Enterprise Institute — often provide forums and desk space for community superstars who have been bumped from the Federal payroll by the Administration of the moment. Some of these centers carry out contract assignments for the Government, but most of them are privately endowed or supported by contributions from foundations and individuals. Much of the time, their studies end up stacked, unread, in offices around Washington, but occasionally they influence the private debates within the executive branch and the more public discussions in Congress.

Foreign diplomats keep an especially watchful eye on the research centers. "Because of the frequent changes of Administration," says Enid Schoettle, international-affairs program officer at the Ford Foundation, "think-tank reports are considered a preview of what might happen after the next election. The author of a particular report might become an Assistant Secretary in the State or Defense Departments."

Consultants are hired by the Pentagon to undertake a wide range of studies — how, for instance, a bomber could be made nearly invisible to radar, or how quickly America's steel mills could be fired up for a drawn-out land war in Europe, or how a nuclear exchange would affect the world's weather. The consultants also provide their military clients with ammunition for the pitched battles that take place within the Defense Department. Thus, a company might be retained by the Navy to produce a thick report endorsing the service's proposal for a new fighter-bomber as superior in design to an Air Force version.

With Congress looking for cuts in the defense budget, and with the rise of criticism about the quality and necessity of some of the consulting work, the Pentagon isn't as free with money as it once was. Nevertheless, business is still good for the community, in Washington and elsewhere. There has been an explosion of new, smaller companies. "There are hundreds of three- and four-man shops," says Thomas D. Bell Jr., president of the Hudson Institute, a private research center founded by Herman Kahn that shifted its headquarters recently from Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., to a university campus in Indianapolis. "If you're a talented think-tank analyst who has gone as far as you can go, there's a tendency to branch out and go as far as you can go on your own."

At the same time, military contractors, in their never-ending quest for new business, are also establishing small research centers. Northrup Corporation two years ago opened its Analysis Center in downtown Washington. Three well-connected members of the community feed company headquarters with informed guesses about the future hardware requirements of the American military — and of prospective foreign customers.

Private philanthropies have been expanding their investments in defense-policy education and research. The John M. Olin Foundation, which takes a hawkish view of national security, has established a fellowship program at Harvard University for study of the subject. In January, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation announced it would award $25 million in grants for war and peace studies to specialists and research centers in the broad area of international security. The more dovish Carnegie Corporation has announced that it would commit up to $7 million to university and other research aimed at reducing the risk of nuclear war. Here and there, individuals are getting into the act. Thomas J. Watson Jr., the former head of I.B.M. who served as Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1979 to 1981, has established the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University, his alma mater.

Academic training and research centers have been established in such cities as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Cambridge, Mass. From these centers, professors and other national-security experts frequently travel to Washington for consulting work. Their fees vary, but they can make as much as $15,000 for a specific assignment — say, helping the Army select sites for the recruit-training centers that would be needed in wartime, or writing a scholarly paper on the difficulties of stopping a Russian tank attack against Western Europe. University tenure permitting, academics often sign up for tours in one or another of the Government's national-security centers. Many universities are expanding or reviving national-security programs that fell into disfavor during the Vietnam War. Some have launched new courses of study in this area — to the dismay, in some cases, of longer-established history and political-science departments competing for university money and faculty slots.

What is the attraction of this exotic trade? Red-white-and-blue patriotism appears to have been the appeal for many veterans of the community, especially those who have been at it since the 1940's and 1950's. The younger members' motivation appears to be more complex. "Many are simply attracted to coercion and violence," says Robert E. Osgood, a member of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, on leave from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. "There is also the appeal of the great technical complexity — the grammar of the subject has its own esoteric appeal. It's a body of knowledge that is very complicated, something other people don't know unless they've taken their vows."

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There is also the glitter and glory of it all. "Students have come to regard this as fairly glamorous work; they see their instructors and faculty advisers dropping everything to dash out and board a plane for Washington," says William W. Kaufmann, who retired last summer as professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Consultant to a long line of Defense Secretaries in the 1960's and 1970's, Mr. Kaufmann has in his day dashed off on several hundred such flights.

Many of those who joined up during the last 10 years are decidedly more tough-minded and less troubled by memories of Vietnam. "The concerns of the community reflect the events of the time," says Samuel P. Huntington, a Harvard professor and mentor of many of the newcomers. "By 1973, you had the flickerings of a new generation — détente was waning, the Soviet Union was on the move in Africa and other parts of the world. The new generation is aggressive, concerned about countering the Soviet threat, focusing on conventional-warfare problems and strategies."

Properly launched, a young defense analyst can go far quickly. Jed C. Snyder was 26 years old in the formative period of the Reagan Administration — and already a special assistant to the director of one of the State Department's national-security enclaves. Today, he is deputy director of the Washington-based national-security division of the Hudson Institute. Another analyst, only two years older than Snyder, has worked for the Central Intelligence Agency and a defense consulting firm; one of his tasks in the latter job was to conjure up the effects of a limited nuclear war in the Middle East. He now advises an influential member of the House of Representatives. "It's easy to get seduced into the business," he says. "It's an awful lot like chess. It's the ultimate game."

BOOM TIMES OR NO, the community of the 1980's is by no means free of internal stresses. Roger C. Molander, a former National Security Council staff member and founder of Ground Zero, a public-interest lobby that focuses on the dangers of nuclear war, is highly critical of many of his fellow experts, comparing them to a priesthood run amok. Mr. Molander, who now heads the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies, a three-year-old Washington research center, says: "The community has demonized what it regards as the threats to the United States. Throughout history, whether it was a tribe or a city-state, those responsible for security affairs have always characterized the guys over the hill as people who had three heads and worshipped tree stumps. That's how many in the community regards much of the world today."

Perhaps the most divisive issue among the experts is whether a nuclear war can be kept "limited" and "won" in any meaningful sense. Some of the high-level specialists in the Reagan Administration believe it can be; the Defense Department's 1982 guidance paper on military doctrine says so explicitly. This position has been attacked by those colleagues on the outside who regard it as a product of right-wing ideology. "The Administration's ideological tests have kept a lot of good people out of government," says Mark Garrison, a former deputy chief of mission at the American Embassy in Moscow and now director of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown. "The few good people who have made it to the inside have had to submerge their views or risk losing their jobs."

Although many of the younger recruits to the community tend to take the hawkish side of the argument, this is not true of all of them. Many of the new members are of the opinion that a nuclear war, once started on any level, would inevitably grow into an all-out engagement; they share the widespread fear that, despite the recent improvement in political atmospherics, Washington and Moscow are sliding toward thermonuclear catastrophe. "The cyclical concerns about the dangers of nuclear war bring new people into the field," says Alexander L. George, professor of international relations at Stanford. "The death of the SALT II treaty and the escalation of rhetoric by President Reagan has stimulated the community, made it more appealing by intensifying those worries." It is one of these younger doves — Randall Forsberg, head of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in Brookline, Mass. — who is generally credited with having started the nuclear-freeze movement.

Another issue is whether the abstract nature of the work has divorced the experts' calculations from the real world. A number of authorities in the field, especially former military officers, fret about the fact that few of the newer breed, be they hawks or doves, have ever spent a day in uniform. "Military service can bring the sobering effect of experience to the analyst," says Andrew J. Goodpaster, a retired Army general who heads the Institute for Defense Analyses, a Federally funded research center across the Potomac from Washington. "It makes a big difference to have commanded troops in combat and seen your troops killed. It makes you less inclined to talk blithely of brush-fire and limited wars."

Apart from disagreement on the issues, there are the occupational risks of the job itself. With each change in Administration there is a wholesale reshuffling of positions, as specialists with private research centers are drawn into government service and experts who served the preceding Administration become subect to wholesale dismissals. "It's a phenomenon that reflects the United States' unique political system," says Prof. Lawrence Freedman of the Department of War Studies, King's College, London. "Just as Renaissance princes wanted their own artists, American Presidents like to have their own national-security advisers around them."

This magnifies the pressures on the experts to compete for positions and promote their ideas. "To succeed, you have to able to market your product," says Barry M. Blechman, assistant director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency under President Carter, who is now with the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies. "If you're published in an obscure journal, almost no one will notice. You have to do good work and know how to push it."

Finally, the entire national-security industry is dependent to a large extent on the level of Federal defense spending, and many of the experts are beginning to confront the notion that the boom might not go on forever. "Because of Federal deficits, there are certain to be far fewer dollars for the military down the road," says one Washington consultant. "Among the for-profit firms, we'll likely see a gradual wave of mergers and some shakeout." Even if the defense budget remains substantial enough to provide steady employment, there are worries about a glut of talent. "I wonder if we aren't approaching the situation lawyers faced five years ago," says a State Department analyst. "We may be near a time when there are too few things to be done by a community this big."

The worry that appears to be shared at the deepest level, however, goes beyond job security, bridges ideologies and doctrines and is likely to be expressed only after a cocktail or two. This is fear of the danger that, as technological progress gives each side less and less time to react to a real or imagined military threat, nuclear war could be set off accidentally or in a situation demanding instant decisions.

"I suppose many of us end up with the same kinds of rationalizations," says Christopher J. Makins, a former deputy director of the Trilateral Commission who is now with a Washington-area defense consulting firm. "That what you're doing is essential because it serves to strengthen deterrence. Or that maybe war would be more likely if *you* weren't on the job." He paused for a moment and added: "You take a pill or whatever you're given to doing, and hope that you get a good night's sleep." ■